

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

Title: Accessible Transit Services for All Populations

Summary: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is soliciting proposals that will examine ways to provide ADA complementary paratransit in a more efficient and cost-effective manner, while maintaining compliance with the DOT ADA regulations (49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38), and identify those factors that prevent persons with disabilities from using the regular accessible fixed-route system. These factors can include the reliability and availability of an accessible fixed-route system and environmental barriers that prevent travel to and from boarding points. The research will analyze operational practices, and assess the cost savings and effectiveness of the practices and their relationship to increased fixed-route use by riders with disabilities. Practices assessed will include (1) implementing conditional paratransit eligibility; (2) surveying and improving bus stops and path of travel to bus stops and stations; (3) providing varying levels of passenger assistance; (4) incorporating travel training; (5) incorporating feeder service; and (6) assessing and ensuring fixed-route accessibility, including elevator and lift maintenance and stop announcements/route identification.

I. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) (49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38), public operators of fixed-route transit systems are required to provide paratransit service between points within $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile of bus routes and a $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile radius of rail stations to persons whose disabilities prevent the use of the fixed-route system. During the past decade, ADA complementary paratransit services have attracted increasing numbers of riders, driving up costs. Additionally, barriers within and beyond the control of transit operators continue to prevent many persons with disabilities from using the regular accessible fixed-route system for some or all of their trips, further increasing the number of individuals using ADA paratransit. Reducing paratransit reliance benefits both the transit industry through cost savings and other operational matters, as well as the disability community who can enjoy the increased mobility, integration, and opportunity for spontaneous travel that a fixed-route system provides.

Identifying barriers and other opportunities to increase the efficiency of paratransit operations could reduce reliance on paratransit and reduce the resources needed to meet the service requirements.

II. EXPECTED FINAL PRODUCTS AND DELIVERY DATES:

This project will produce by December 2012 an analysis of the paratransit and fixed-route operations of selected transit agencies in urban, suburban and rural areas, identifying ways to provide cost-effective, efficient, and complaint ADA paratransit service and to reduce operational and environmental barriers that impede use of accessible fixed-route service by persons with disabilities.

Scope. Outline a plan of action, organized by work task, pertaining to the scope and detail of how the proposed work will be accomplished. List estimated milestone dates for major research activities and reports.

Activities should be justified in terms of the four eligible research activities. Applicants are asked to include a summary table (see example below) complementing the detailed description in the proposal narrative. Although supporting several activities is desirable, proposals should clearly demonstrate the connection between the planned work and at least one of the specific research activities cited.

III. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Award amount.

FTA has budgeted approximately \$500,000 for the program in this iteration of the program. Future funding will depend on Congressional appropriation. Proposals must have a minimum threshold of \$500,000 and a maximum of \$500,000. FTA reserves the right to change this amount based on the quantity and quality of applications submitted under this RFA. FTA may also choose to fund programs for less than the proposed amount. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals for quality projects at whatever funding level

is appropriate for the project, recognizing that FTA's contributions will be limited according to the funding range specified above. The FTA will participate in activities by attending review meetings, commenting on technical reports, maintaining frequent contact with the project manager and approving key decisions and activities any redirecting activities if needed.

B. Period of performance

The period of grant performance will be 18 months from the date of execution of the grant documents. This performance period includes all necessary implementation and start-up activities, execution of the program, and completion of final deliverables as specified in the applicant's Scope of Work. The Department intends that all grantees implement the programs awarded as soon as possible. Applicants should plan to fully expend grant funds during the period of performance, recognizing that full transparency and accountability is required for all expenditures.

- FTA anticipates awarding proposals for work to be completed within 12-18 months of receipt of the funding award.
- FTA may choose to fund only a part of a proposed project or none at all.
- FTA will also consider projects of longer duration, provided that the work activities and product delivery is phased in such a way as to produce a viable product during the period of performance specified in this RFA.
- Upon award, FTA may withdraw its obligation to provide Federal assistance if the recipient does not submit the formal application (to be completed after selection) within 90 days following the date of the offer.

Deadline/Target Dates: Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov/>) by **JUNE 16, 2011**.

IV. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligible recipients include public and private universities, non-profit organizations, consultants, legally constituted public agencies, and private for-profit organizations.

A. Cost Sharing

Cost sharing or local matching funds are not required as a condition for application, but leveraged resources are strongly encouraged and may affect an applicant's final score.

B. Other eligibility requirements

i. Proposed Activities

The purpose of this RFA is to examine ways to provide ADA complementary paratransit in a more efficient and cost-effective manner, while maintaining compliance with the DOT ADA regulations (49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38), and identify those factors that prevent persons with disabilities from using the regular accessible fixed-route system.

ii. Characteristics of Training Activities

Activities pursued under this program must support one or more of the below subject areas.

1. Conduct general literature review
2. Examine operational practices of transit agencies selected
3. Identify practices that have reduced costs, improved efficiency, and increased mobility of persons with disabilities
4. Make recommendations on how to improve cost savings and efficiency of paratransit service, while ensuring ADA compliance

iii. Allowable Activities

Projects must include costs that will examine ways to provide ADA complementary paratransit in a more efficient and cost-effective manner, Acceptable costs can

include, but are not limited to: salaries and fringe benefits, support staff, materials and supplies.

iv. *Capital Expenses*

Capital expenses are not considered to be eligible costs .

IV. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Potential applicants are advised to familiarize themselves with the application process on www.grants.gov well before the submission deadline. Eligible entities must have or must secure a DUNS number for the purposes of formal application and potential entry into a cooperative agreement with FTA. The DUNS number is a unique nine-character number that identifies your organization. It is a tool of the federal government to track how federal money is distributed. Each FTA applicant's DUNS number will be maintained as part of the applicant's profile. This number can be obtained free through the D&B website (http://www.dnb.com/US/duns_update/).

In addition, each entity that applies and does not have an exemption under § 2 CFR 25.110 should:

- (1) Be registered in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) prior to submitting an application or plan (www.ccr.gov), and
- (2) Maintain an active CCR registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by an agency;

The applicant should submit a project narrative statement describing the project objectives, proposed work tasks, outputs, and benefits of the proposed project for which Federal assistance is being requested.

If the project is a proposal seeking support for an existing program, it should describe the proposed FTA-supported project within the context of the larger effort.

The narrative should also indicate whether matching funds would be provided, the expected duration of the project, and other information that would assist FTA to understand and evaluate the project. Each submission for a project narrative statement should not exceed 12 pages (either single-

spaced, single-sided, 12 point font on 8.5x11 inch paper) and must include the information listed below:

a. **Project Title, Objective(s), and Contact Person.** At the top of the document, state the title of the project and provide 2-3 sentences describing the intended project goals and outcomes. List the contact person for this application along with his or her address, title, phone number, fax number, and email address.

b. **Statement of the Problem(s).** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is soliciting proposals that will examine ways to provide ADA complementary paratransit in a more efficient and cost-effective manner, while maintaining compliance with the DOT ADA regulations (49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38), and identify those factors that prevent persons with disabilities from using the regular accessible fixed-route system. These factors can include the reliability and availability of an accessible fixed-route system and environmental barriers that prevent travel to and from boarding points.

Finally, identify uncertainties and external factors that could affect the schedule, cost, or success of the program. Supporting documentation may be provided as an attachment that will not count toward the total page limit. Such information will be considered supplementary and will not necessarily be considered by FTA in the project selection process.

c. **Scope.** Outline a plan of action, organized by work task, pertaining to the scope and detail of how the proposed work will be accomplished. List estimated milestone dates for major activities and products.

Activities should be justified in terms of the four eligible program activities. Applicants are asked to include a summary table (see example below) complementing the detailed description in the proposal narrative. Although supporting several activities is desirable, proposals should clearly demonstrate the connection between the planned work and at least one of the specific program activities cited.

Program Activities (see section I)	Addressed by	Brief description (2-3 paragraphs) of how the planned project supports
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	Proposal (Yes / No)	program activities
1. Conduct general literature review		
2. Examine operational practices of transit agencies selected		
3. Identify practices that have reduced costs, improved efficiency, and increased mobility of persons with disabilities		
4. Make recommendations on how to improve cost savings and efficiency of paratransit service, while ensuring ADA compliance		

The scope should also address supporting activities, such as marketing plans for engaging participants and/or dissemination strategies for sharing the results, if such are critical to the success of the supported program.

The applicant must plan to produce at least one final deliverable that will become available to FTA at the end of the project for dissemination and sharing throughout the industry at no cost. Acceptable final products include, but are not limited to, class materials, websites or software, recruitment materials, and reports. This product is in addition to the performance reporting requirements described in Section f.

If a phased plan is being proposed, describe the context and additional phases on a separate page or separate pages.

d. Period of Performance. Provide a schedule for completion of tasks assuming a total period of performance of 12-18 months. If a proposal specifies work that will exceed 18 months from award to delivery of outputs, the proposal must segment the work into phases and identify discrete deliverables that will be completed during the period of performance of this program. If a phased plan is being proposed, describe schedule for additional phases on a separate page or separate pages (not counted toward the page maximum).

e. Cost. Provide a cost proposal indicating staffing levels, hours, and direct costs for the total project and amount of funding requested from FTA. As appropriate, the cost proposal should also show the nature and value of in-kind resources that team members will contribute. The proposal should also describe the source, purpose and amount of matching funds that will be used to make up any monetary difference between FTA's contribution and the total project cost. If a phased plan is being proposed, describe the planned costs for additional phases on a separate page or separate pages (not counted toward the page maximum). Keep in mind that funding through this program is only intended to support a single phase of a project, even if the project encompasses multiple phases.

f. Performance Measurement. Provide an approach for demonstrating the local and/or nationwide impact of the pilot project on the transit industry. The proposal should include a description of the applicant's plan for recording the outcomes and reporting at the minimum the following to FTA at the end of the project:

- **The number of individuals affected by the project.** Applicants should define “affected individuals” in terms that make sense for the proposed project.
- **The costs of the project and the share of federal investment;**
- **At least one measure of quality;** Quantitative metrics are preferred, but qualitative metrics will be considered provided they are based on the experiences of those affected by the program (as opposed to the self-assessment of the applicant or partner agencies). Metrics could include, but are not limited to, survey results; exit interviews; longitudinal tracking of staff (during the period of performance only);
- **A 1-2 page project description** that will state the pilot project’s initial goals and achievements against those goals. This statement can also include “lessons learned.”
- **A 1-2 page statement of applicability** to other entities. Once the program is complete, the applicant will be asked to describe how the pilot project could be scaled and/or altered for application elsewhere, and what types of benefits could be realized by doing so.
- Any other performance measure that the applicant thinks would describe the strengths and weaknesses of the project.

As part of the proposal, provide projections (for quantitative measures) or short hypotheses (for qualitative measures) of what type of impact/performance FTA could expect from the project.

g. Project Management. Describe the applicant’s approach for managing and staffing the project, including the distribution of responsibilities among partner entities and an organizational chart, if applicable. Include responsibilities such as regular reporting, performance measurement, and technical/management interactions with FTA. Quarterly cost and activity progress reporting will be required using a template provided by FTA.

h. Project Staff. List each organization, operator, consultant, or other key individuals who will work on the project, along with short descriptions of their appropriate technical expertise and experience (such as past, relevant research). Attach resumes or curriculum vitae if available. Project staff resumes or curriculum vitae will not count towards the total page count for proposal submissions.

V. PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

Projects will be selected based on the following criteria:

- Statement of Need (15 points)
- Project Management and Organizational Capacity (10 points)
- Strategy and Project Work Plan (30 points)
- Outcomes and Deliverables (10 points)
- Innovation (20 points)
- National Applicability (15 points)

Statement of Need (15 points)

The need will examine ways to provide ADA complementary paratransit in a more efficient and cost-effective manner, while maintaining compliance with the DOT ADA regulations (49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38), and identify those factors that prevent persons with disabilities from using the regular accessible fixed-route system.

Project Management and Organizational Capacity (10 points)

An applicant must fully describe the capacity of the applicant and its required partners to effectively staff the proposed initiative and deliver the proposed outcomes. The application must also fully describe the applicant's fiscal, administrative, and performance management capacity to implement the key components of this project, and the track record of the applicant and its required partners in implementing projects of similar focus, size, and scope.

Strategy and Project Work Plan (30 points)

An applicant must provide a comprehensive project work plan. Factors considered in evaluating the project work plan will include: (1) The presentation of a coherent plan that demonstrates the applicant's complete understanding of all the activities, responsibilities, and costs required to implement each phase of the project and achieve projected outcomes; (2) the demonstrated feasibility and reasonableness of the timeline for accomplishing all necessary implementation activities. (3) the extent to which the budget aligns with the proposed work plan and is justified with respect to the adequacy and reasonableness of resources requested.

Outcomes and Deliverables (10 points)

An applicant must demonstrate a results-oriented approach to managing and operating its project by providing projections for all applicable outcome categories relevant to measuring the success or impact of the project, describing the products and deliverables that will be produced as a result of the grant activities, and fully demonstrating the appropriateness and feasibility of achieving these results. The applicant must include projected outcomes, which will be used as goals for the grant.

Innovation (20 points)

A project should identify a unique, significant, or innovative approach to ADA complementary paratransit in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

National Applicability (15 points)

The project should have national or regional applicability.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

a. Notification. After FTA has selected the proposals to be funded, successful applicants will be notified by e-mail or telephone of their status.

A package containing a formal “award letter,” instructions for entering into a cooperative agreement with FTA, copies of agreements for execution, and an approved budget will be sent to organizations (listed point of contact) whose submitted proposals have been selected for funding under the program. The “award letter” will indicate the date of the award and set forth any special conditions under which the project is approved. The date of award is the date that authorizes the recipient to incur project costs. Any activities that occur before this award are not eligible for reimbursement.

b. Execution of the FTA Agreement. The recipient should execute and date the copies in accordance with the instructions provided in the award package, and return two copies of the FTA agreement to the FTA Office of Chief Counsel per the instructions. FTA should be advised promptly if the recipient is unable to execute the FTA agreement within 90 days after the obligation date, (i.e., the date on which FTA officially approved a project).

c. Start Date and Incurred Costs. Absent special circumstances, costs incurred prior to FTA award are not eligible as project expenses. Absent highly unusual circumstances, FTA cannot retroactively approve a project. The recipient may begin to incur project costs as of the date the award letter is signed by FTA and submitted to the awardee for signature.

VII. CONTACTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Prospective applicants may also wish to visit the following websites for more information:

- www.fta.dot.gov
- For more on managing projects in accordance with FTA Circular 6100.C: Transit Research and Technology Programs: Application Instructions and Program Management Guidelines: http://www.fta.dot.gov/laws/circulars/leg_reg_4121.html. This includes requirements on project management and administration including quarterly reporting, financial management, and payment.